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SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 8056

E.O. 12065 GDS 9-28-85 (FREEMAN, ANTHONY G.) OR-P
TAGS PG0V, AR
SUBJECT DIVISIONS IN THE MILITARY

REF: BUENOS AIRES 7963

1. SUMMARY: WE SEE SEVERAL REASONS FOR THE DEEP CONCERN GENERAL VIOLA EXPRESSED TO THE AMBASSADOR WHEN THEY MET SEPTEMBER 25 (REFTEL). ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, TIMERMAN WAS RELEASED OVER THE OBJECTIONS OF A NUMBER OF SENIOR ARMY GENERALS, LENDING SUBSTANCE TO VIOLA'S ASSERTION THAT THE TIMERMAN EXPULSION HAD DANGEROUSLY DIVIDED THE ARMY. THE TIMERMAN DEBACLE ALONG WITH OTHER DRAMATIC EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK, INCLUDING THE DISCOVERY AND ELIMINATION OF TWO TOP MONTONERO LEADERS AND THE ATTACK ON THE RESIDENCE OF ECONOMY SECRETARY KLEIN, COULD UPSET VIOLA'S REPORTED PLANS TO NAME GENERAL GALTIERI AS ARMY COMMANDER AND RETIRE FROM THE ARMY IN DECEMBER 1979 AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS HAVING HIMSELF NAMED PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE NEXT YEAR. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD SEPTEMBER 27 CARRIED A OTICIAS ARGENTINAS NEWS AGENCY REPORT THAT THE GOVERNMENT DECISION TO FREE JACOBO TIMERMAN IN COMPLIANCE WITH A SUPREME COURT RULING WAS MADE OVER THE OBJECTIONS OF A NUMBER OF SENIOR ARMY GENERALS. ACCORDING TO THE HERALD'S REVISION OF THE NEWS AGENCY'S REPORT, SIX OF THE NINE MOST SENIOR ARMY GENERALS VOTED AGAINST COMPLYING WITH THE SUPREME COURT RULING, TRANSMITTING THIS OPINION TO ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL VIOLA ON SEPTEMBER 24. PRESIDENT VIDELA'S REACTION REPORTEDLY WAS TO THREATEN TO RESIGN FROM OFFICE IF THE JUNTA, RESPONDING TO THE GENERAL'S OPINION, REFUSED TO COMPLY WITH THE SUPREME COURT ORDER. VIOLA TAKING THE POSITION THAT ONE OF THE COMMITMENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHEN THEY ASSUMED POWER IN 1976 WAS TO RESPECT THE DECISIONS OF THE COURTS. ACCORDING TO THE STORY, THE JUSTICE MINISTER AND ALL FIVE MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME COURT ALSO PLANNED TO RESIGN. THE FOLLOWING DAY, AFTER AN UNUSUAL 6:30 AM MEETING WITH THE ARMY COMMAND BETWEEN PRESIDENT VIDELA AND GENERAL VIOLA, THE LATTER, PRESUMABLY AFTER BRIEFING ARMY GENERALS ON THE PRESIDENT'S REACTION, ASKED THE GENERALS AGAIN FOR THEIR OPINIONS. THIS TIME ONLY TWO OPPOSED THE FREEDING OF TIMERMAN PROVIDING HE WAS STRIPPED OF HIS CITIZENSHIP AND EXPELLED FROM THE COUNTRY. IT WAS THEN THAT TIMERMAN WAS WHISKED AWAY TO THE AIRPORT AND PLACED ON A FLIGHT TO ISRAEL.

3. THIS REPORT PROVIDES FURTHER SUBSTANCE TO GENERAL VIOLA'S COMMENTARY TO THE AMBASSADOR (REFTEL) PRESSING THAT THE TIMERMAN EXPULSION DECISION HAD EATEN BITTER DIVISIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY WHICH COULD TAKE A LONG TIME TO HEAL, IMPLYING THAT THERE COULD BE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON OTHER POLITICAL DECISIONS. ONE OF THE IMMEDIATE ISSUES IS WHAT TO DO ABOUT FORMER PRESIDENT HECTOR CAMPORA. ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT

CITING INFORMED SOURCES, THE GOVERNMENT WILL GRANT CAMPORA SAFE CONDUCT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY WHEN IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED THAT CAMPORA HAS CANCER. A BIOPSY REPORTEDLY CAN BE MADE WITHOUT CAMPORA'S LEAVING MEXICAN EMBASSY PREMISES.)

4. (U) A WEIGHTIER DECISION TO BE MADE IN TERMS OF THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, RELATED TO THE VIOLA SUCCESSION ISSUE. IT HAS BEEN SEMI-OFFICIALLY STATED FOR LONG THAT VIOLA WOULD NAME HIS SUCCESSOR AND RETIRE FROM THE ARMY IN DECEMBER 1979, AND BE DESIGNATED BY THE JUNTA AROUND SEPTEMBER 1980 TO SUCCEED PRESIDENT VIDELA AT THE END OF THE LATTER'S MANDATE IN MARCH 1981. VIOLA ISSUED A STATEMENT ON AUGUST 30 IN TUCUMAN CONFIRMING THAT "IN PRINCIPLE" HE PLANNED TO RETIRE AT THE END OF THIS YEAR AND ADMITTING THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE WOULD SUCCEED VIDELA. HOWEVER, IN THAT STATEMENT VIOLA ACKNOWLEDGED SOMETHING COULD ALWAYS HAPPEN TO MODIFY HIS RETIREMENT PLANS. HE GAVE NO EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT UPSET HIS PLANS, BUT THE CONTEXT IN WHICH HE MADE THIS STATEMENT SUGGESTED TO SOME HE WAS THINKING PARTICULARLY OF THE BEAGLE CHANNEL PROBLEM OR PERHAPS THE POSSIBILITY OF LABOR UNREST.

5. ON THAT SAME DAY, PRESIDENT VIDELA, SPEAKING IN ROSARIO TOLD THE LOCAL GRAIN BOARD THAT HE WOULD GOVERN "WITHOUT DIMINUTION OF VIGOR" UNTIL 1981, AND IN A PRESS CONFERENCE STATED THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF CHANGING THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES. THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THAT STATEMENT WAS MADE SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS INTENDED TO SCOTCH A RUMOR CAMPAIGN THAT VIOLA, INFLUENCED BY PRESSURES

FROM SUAREZ MASON AND ALLEGEDLY FED UP WITH THE INABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SOLVE THE INFLATION AND RELATED ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, WAS CONTEMPLATING THE POSSIBILITY OF ASKING VIDELA TO STEP DOWN BEFORE THE END OF HIS TERM OF OFFICE, MAKING HIMSELF PRESIDENT IN VIDELA'S TEAD, AND FORCING THE RESIGNATION OF ECONOMY MINISTER MARTINEZ DE HOS (SEE BUENOS AIRES 6112). ANOTHER FACTOR FEEDING SPECULATION ABOUT A VIOLA PRESIDENCY EARLIER THAN MARCH 1981 IS THE REALIZATION THAT SOLDIERS WHO RESIGN FROM THE MILITARY WITH THE INTENTION OF SEEKING HIGHER POLITICAL OFFICE USUALLY FIND THAT THEIR PRESIDENTIAL PROSPECTS DWINDLE RAPIDLY AFTER THEY TAKE OFF THEIR UNIFORMS. (A RECENT CASE-IN-POINT

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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S THAT OF ADMIRAL MASSERA WHOSE POLITICAL MOMENTUM SINCE RETIRING FROM THE NAVY AND THE JUNTA HAS NOT KEPT P WITH EXPECTATIONS.) UNDER THIS THEORY, VIOLA RECOGNIZED HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO STEP INTO CIVILIAN IMBO FOR NINE MONTHS UNTIL THE JUNTA NAMED HIM PRESIDENT-ESIGNATE IN SEPTEMBER OF 1980, BECAUSE, MILITARY INSTABILITY BEING WHAT IT WAS, SOMETHING WAS LIKELY TO APPEN TO THROW THE VIOLA PRESIDENCY OFF THE TRACKS DURING HIS LAPSE OF TIME. IT WAS THIS CONSIDERATION WHICH ENERATED SPECULATION THAT VIOLA WOULD BE COMPELLED TO AKE A DEAL WITH ARMY CHIEF-OF-STAFF GENERAL SUAREZ MASON HEREBY THE ARMY (PRESUMABLY RATIFIED BY THE JUNTA) WOULD AKE VIOLA TO TAKE VIDELA'S JOB TOWARD THE END OF 1979 ND SUAREZ MASON WOULD SUCCEED VIOLA AS ARMY COMMANDER. ANOTHER THEORY, FED BY VIOLA'S TUCUMAN STATEMENT, IS HAT HE INTENDS TO PROLONG HIS TERM AS ARMY COMMANDER EYOND DECEMBER IN ORDER TO SHORTEN HIS PERIOD OUT OF FFICE TO A MINIMUM. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, HE WOULD HAVE O CITE, OR FABRICATE, SOME CRISI AS JUSTIFICATION.)

AS OF THIS WRITING, THE TWO LEADING CONTENDERS O SUCCEED VIOLA AS ARMY COMMANDER ARE, WE BELIEVE, STILL UAREZ MASON AND ARMY I CORPS COMMANDER GALTIERI. OUR RAGMENTARY INFORMATION UNTIL THE DRAMATIC EVENTS OF HIS PAST WEEK SUGGESTED, ON BALANCE, THAT VIOLA INTENDED, ND WOULD PROBABLY BE ABLE, TO AVOID THE "SUAREZ MASON ENARIO" AND NAME MILITARY ENGINEER GALTIERI HIS SUCCESSOR, RJCING THE RETIREMENT (OR ASSIGNMENT ABROAD) OF HARDLINE VALRY OFFICERS SUAREZ MASON AND III CORPS COMMANDER ENERAL MENENDEZ ALONG WITH TWO OTHER SENIOR GENEALS NTRARY TO THE SPECULATION ABOUT A VIOLA-SUAREZ MASON EAL AND INTER VANTION OF VIDELA'S TERM OF OFFICE, THE ALTIERI SUCCESSION WOULD BE CONSONNANT WITH A MORE DERLY SCENARIO WITH VIDELA'S SUCCESSOR (IE VIOLA) KING OVER THE PRESIDENCY IN MARCH 1981 AS CALLED FOR IN IE "SCHEME OF POWER" ARRANGEMENT AGREED TO BY THE JUNTA IST YEAR. N TERMS OF ECONOMIC ISSUES, A GALTIERI ELECTION AS ARMY COMMANDER WOULD IMPLY A CONTINUATION THE MARTINEZ DE HOZ POLICIES, ON THE POLITICAL SIDE EATER PROGRESS TOWARDS A GRADUAL CIVILIAN OPENING AND I THE QUESTION OF THE REPRESSION OF SUEVERSION, A TENDENCY IWARD RETURN T THE RULE OF LAW. SUAREZ MASON'S ELECTION CNJURES UP A DIFFERENT PICTURE IN POLITICAL CLES CONSISTING ON THE ONE HAND OF CONTINUED HARDLINE RESSION AGAINST THOSE CONSIDERED TO BE SUBVESIVES ND POSSIBLY AN EXPANSION OF THE TARGETS) BUT ALSO THE SSIBILITY OF POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WITH PERONISTS AND HER NATIONALISTS, AT LEAST WITH RESPECT TO ECONOMIC ICIES. THESE CONTRASTING SCENARIOS ARE EXAGGERATED OUR VIEW, BUT THEY REPRESENT (TO SOME DEGREE SELF-TERESTED) NOTIONS WHIC CIRCULATE AMONG POLITICAL RTY AND JOURNALIST SOURCES.

IT SEEMS TO US NOW MORE LIKELY THAT SUAREZ SON, FACED WITH THE LIKELIHOOD THAT GALTIERI WAS OLAS HAND PICKED SUCCESSOR, WILL TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE

OF ANY OPPORTUNITY BETWEEN NOW AND THE END OF THE YAEAR TO UPSET VIOLA'S GAME PLAN, INCLUDING A NEW OUTBREAK OF LABOR UNREST OR AHEATING UP THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE. THE DRAMATIC EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK, OR SO, INCLUDING THE VISIT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, THE DISCOVERY AND ELIMINATION OF TWO TOP MONTONERO LEADERS IN THE COUNTRY, THE TOUGH TEINERMAN DECISION AND NOW THE ARMED ATTACK BY UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANTS ON THE HOUSE OF MARTINEZ DE HOZ'S RIGHT-HAND MA, GUILLERMO WALTER KLEIN, JR., ARE JUST THE RIGHT ELEMENTS FOR UNSETTLING THE UNEASY BALANCE IN THE ARMY AND CREATING A CHANGED GAME BOARD ON WHICH VIOLA MUST NOW PLAN NEW STRATEGY.

CASTRO

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